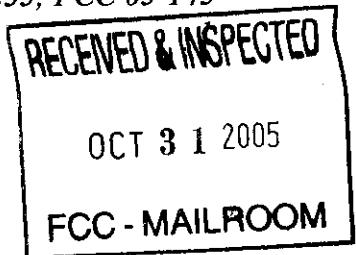


Before the
Federal Communications Commission
Washington, D.C. 20554



In the Matter of)	
)	
Amendment of Part 97 of the Commission's)	WT Docket No. 05-235
Rules)	
To Implement WRC-03 Regulations)	RM-10781, RM-10782, RM-10783
Applicable to Requirement for Operator)	RM-10784, RM-10785, RM-10786
Licenses in the Amateur Radio Service)	RM-10787, RM-10805, RM-10806
)	RM-10807, RM-10808, RM-10809
)	RM-10810, RM-10811, RM-10867
)	RM-10868, RM-10869, RM-10870

Comments of Melissa Ann Franklin

In response to the FCC's request for public comments, 70 Fed. Reg. 51705 (July 19, 2005), I would like to highlight points relevant to graduate students like myself, who, upon entering their profession, will have both the time and means to pursue an Amateur Radio license. Ham radio serves numerous worthy purposes and thus licenses should be as accessible as possible to the public. Therefore, the 5 WPM Morse code testing requirement should be dropped from all Amateur Radio licenses.

Introduction

There is no legitimate reason why the 5 WPM Morse code requirement should remain as part of an Amateur Radio license exam. The FCC's policy to embrace new technology, streamline the license process, and make Public Radio as accessible as possible demand that the antiquated requirement be eliminated. Because ham operators

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have proven themselves vital and selfless in emergency situations such as Katrina, the American public will only benefit from having larger pools of ham operators to rely on in such events. Morse code is not a skill integral to successfully operating or impacting ham radio, therefore the 5 WPM Morse code testing requirement should be dropped from all Amateur Radio license examinations.

Removing Morse Allows Ham Radio to be More Accessible

The FCC should intend to keep Amateur radio as accessible and open as possible. Requiring an applicant to study a form of communication popular the 1920's but outdated today does not attract prospects to the licensing process. Morse is not easy to learn, and its requirement dissuades people from attempting to get licensed. Public interest demands elimination of this requirement. Amateur radio is losing a huge number of potentially excellent operators and leaders in the field because of the Morse requirement. A prospective licensee could possess vast knowledge in electronics but could still be denied a license because of his declination to learn Morse. The FCC should support the use of new technologies, not cling to the past. Most new licensees will probably wish to communicate in the voice mode. Although there are numerous avenues of communication other than Morse available to ham operators, the Amateur test does not require demonstrated proficiency in any of these. Why should Morse be singled out?

Critics say the Morse requirement is needed as a filtering device for examinees so that ham radio does not become the "den of filth" that CB radio has evolved into. The written exam still will act as any filter desired, and can be made more stringent if needed.

Restricting the number of licensees via Morse testing involves discrimination and human rights issues, as some disabled persons cannot fulfill the requirement.

Removing Morse Streamlines the Testing Process

The Morse part of the Amateur exam is cumbersome to the entire licensing process. It requires special equipment and can be a distraction to others taking the written exam in the same room. Under 47 CFR §97.507(d) the VEC (Volunteer Exam Coordinator) must prepare enough Morse messages that none used will be predictable to any examinee. Each message must utilize all 43 characters within five minutes and consist of roughly 25 words, making it difficult for a VEC to create a realistic message. Because of the Morse requirement, too much preparation and equipment is needed for exams. At the FCC meeting held in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania in July 2003, the VEC's agreed that since WRC-03 ended the Morse requirement, it should be deleted from the American licensing exam. The FCC should respect the opinions of those willing to volunteer their time to give the examinations.

Morse Code is Outdated

In the 1920's Morse was appropriately tested as an Amateur license requirement, as it was the main communication used in emergency situations. The phone has replaced Morse code today. In a disaster where cell towers are down, radio may be of no immediate use as it is likely antennae have been destroyed as well. Morse is no longer a popular form of communication, and members of relief agencies whom ham operators speak to in emergencies probably do not know Morse either. Moreover, to use Morse

you have to be able to hear, which may not be the case in an emergency situation.

Satellite and digital communications are thus more effective in emergency situations.

Morse code is not a skill required for licensing in any radio service besides Amateur Service. The commercial world abandoned CW years ago, but it remained a requirement for an Amateur license because of international regulations. Morse is not a skill one needs in order to operate a radio station, and relevant skills such as voice or keyboard are not required for an Amateur license. Passing the current Morse exam test does not even indicate if one will be skilled at CW. In this age we would be better served by a host of ham operators experienced in radio, computer, and networking skills, rather than those skilled in Morse.

People Who Want to Use Morse Are Still Free to Do So

The FCC is not proposing an elimination of the use of Morse on the airways or even determining that Morse is in fact outdated. Morse is used today primarily as a pastime or for recreation, and this can be continued by anyone with the desire. Although any licensee may freely use Morse, the FCC does not mandate communication through Morse on the airwaves. For this reason, competency in Morse should not be mandated to gain a license.

The International Community is Turning Away from Morse Testing

The FCC should follow the international trend of dropping the Morse requirement from Amateur licenses. In 2001, the International Amateur Radio Union (IARU) declared its support for the removal of Morse code testing for Amateur licenses operating

at frequencies of 30 MHz or below. Article 25 of the international *Radio Regulations* was revised at the World Radiocommunication Conference in 2003. In the revision, WRC-03 eliminated Morse as a tested requirement for applicants eligible for HF privileges and determined that individual countries could decide if they wanted to include Morse in their testing. As a result, other countries have eliminated the Morse requirement for an Amateur license. Many countries in Europe have already moved to drop the Morse requirement from the Amateur exam. The international community has eliminated the requirement of Morse, so there is no reason for the FCC to cling to this requirement.

Morse Requirement is Unfair to Persons with Disabilities

Handicapped and disabled license seekers are at a disadvantage by the Morse code requirement. Any examinee with a hearing impediment or other relevant medical condition may petition the FCC for a waiver of the CW requirement pursuant to the Americans with Disabilities Act. The FCC used to rely on the international requirement to rationalize Morse testing, but now it cannot. If the Morse requirement can be waived by a physician, it is unfair to hold the remaining examinees to the Morse code test.

Ham Operators are Integral in Emergency Situations

Ham operators have proven themselves a noble group offering aid during emergency situations. Because of their positive impact and service during crises, the FCC should want as many helping hands licensed as possible. Amateur operators came to the rescue when telephone and wireless service was down during Katrina. Ham

operators communicating with each other and rescue teams saved flood victims. In New Orleans, while the 911-telephone system was inundated with calls, 15 people stranded on the roof of a house were rescued because of ham operators. Other victims were rescued when licensed Amateurs contacted the Coast Guard who then informed the local Sheriff's Department. Amateur operators opened their homes as communication centers, using generators and hand made antennas. An American Red Cross ECU (Emergency Communications Unit) arrived with no operator, so a ham operator assisted and installed equipment. Countless ham operators relayed messages from Parish EOC's (Emergency Operations Center) to the Red Cross and State EOC. Ham operators secured food for victims, had victims moved from small hospitals incapable of dealing with certain injuries to more equipped medical centers, relayed health and welfare messages on H.F., and reported road conditions.

Two hundred and fifty Amateur Radio emergency service volunteers were working in Katrina stricken areas. We were lucky to have these operators licensed, because health and welfare requests were so numerous after the storm that the Internet server was overwhelmed. Two million people in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama were without power. Despite this fact, Amateur Radio SKYWARN reported weather conditions to the National Weather Service, giving ground-level weather updates to the National Hurricane Service. All of this communication did not hinge on a proficiency in Morse.

In addition to monitoring relief calls, ham operators also helped serve and cook food, provided security, and assisted the American Red Cross in Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, and Louisiana. Ham operators are selfless in their public service during

emergency situations. The federal government rightly granted \$100,000 to the ARRL to support its operations in states hit by Katrina. Because of this, "Ham Aid" has developed, which supports licensed Amateurs working in disaster-stricken areas. Aren't ham operators a group of people we would like to enlarge, not turn away by an antiquated Morse requirement?

America would be better served by a larger number of potential communicators in crisis situations. For this reason, licenses should be as accessible as possible. The Amateur Radio Emergency Service has been established, which is a group of licensed Amateurs who volunteer their communication ability for public service. An Amateur station has been established at the National Hurricane Center and the Salvation Army Team Emergency Radio Network (SATERN). These organizations are vital to Americans, as ham radio can be used when phone lines and other avenues of communication are down.

Conclusion

Ham operators have impacted our culture and well being in monumental ways. Public radio should be just that – public. The FCC's mission should allow for the greatest number of people to participate in Amateur Radio as is safely possible. Requiring a Morse test for an Amateur license is turning away potentially great operators that could help others in an emergency. Various methods of communication are open to ham operators, including television, Morse, voice, and computers. Ham operators have reached such sophistication that they can communicate to the other side of the world. It no longer serves the public to require ham operators to be skilled in Morse, as most

operators do not use CW. These operators have proven that Morse is not a skill needed to save victims in a flood or transfer patients from one hospital to another. For these reasons, the FCC should drop the 5 WPM Morse requirement from all Amateur Radio exams.



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